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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7310

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PREL, PTER, KS, KN

SUBJECT: KA 858: EVOLVING KOREAN STRATEGY FOR U.N.

REF: USUN 285 AND PREVIOUS

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. FOREIGN MINISTER CHOI KWANG SOO CALLED IN AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 4 TO DISCUSS ROKG'S EVOLVING STRATEGY FOR HANDLING THE KA 858 CASE AT THE U.N. DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS KIM SAI-TAIK, SPECIAL ASSISTANT YU MYUNG HWAN (UNTIL THIS MONTH, DIRECTOR FOR AMERICAN AFFAIRS), AND POLCOUNS WERE ALSO PRESENT. CHOI IMMEDIATELY REFERRED TO THE ONGOING AND EXCELLENT COORDINATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ROK MISSIONS AT THE U.N. (REFTEL), AND EXPLAINED HE WANTED TO CLARIFY HIS CURRENT THINKING FOR US.
3. CHOI ACKNOWLEDGED THE DIFFICULTY OF POSTPONING A DECISION ON WHETHER TO TAKE THE ISSUE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL MUCH FURTHER. HE HAD SET AN INFORMAL DEADLINE OF FEB. 5 HIMSELF, AND WAS NOW UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM THE CONFIDENTIAL

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KOREAN PRESS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TO GIVE THEM A DEFINITE ANSWER. HE STILL CONSIDERED THE SECURITY COUNCIL THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORUM AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO DETER FURTHER TERRORISM, BUT OUR RESPECTIVE U.N. MISSIONS WERE LESS POSITIVE THAN WASHINGTON APPEARED TO BE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS THERE. HE RECOUNTED U.N. AMBASSADOR PARK'S ANALYSIS, WHICH TRACKED CLOSELY WITH THAT REPORTED REFTEL, AND EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THIS DID NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT CONFIDENCE TO UNDERTAKE A STEP THAT WOULD BE SO IMPORTANT POLITICALLY IN KOREA. CHOI NOTED THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE WOULD BE FAR GREATER HERE THAN IN THE U.S., AND

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ROBERT J. MARTENS
DATE/CASE ID: 29 OCT 1998 199403292

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EXPLAINED THIS STEMMED NOT ONLY FROM THE ROK'S GREATER INTEREST BUT ALSO FROM THE SPECIAL HISTORICAL STATUS THE U.N. HAS IN THE MINDS OF ALL KOREANS.

4. CHOI CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS INSTRUCTING AMB. PARK TO MAKE HIS STRONGEST EFFORTS FOR A FEW MORE DAYS IN AN ATTEMPT TO LINE UP THE NEEDED NINE VOTES FOR INSCRIPTION. CHOI SAID HE WOULD MAKE A FINAL DECISION ON THE ROK'S U.N. STRATEGY ON FEB. 9 OR 10, BASED ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE INTERVAL. CHOI ASKED THE U.S. TO CONTINUE ITS OWN LOBBYING EFFORTS AT THE U.N. AND IN COUNCIL MEMBER CAPITALS, AND TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS ESPECIALLY TO THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE:

-- HE HOPED THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR POSITIONS, WOULD NOT LOBBY STRONGLY AGAINST BRINGING THE ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A DEBATE;

-- THE NORTH WOULD HAVE ITS OWN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK AND PRESENT ITS CASE;

-- THE ROK WOULD NOT REFER TO THE KAL 007 SHOOT-DOWN OR

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ANYTHING ELSE THAT MIGHT EMBARRASS THE SOVIET UNION OR CHINA;

-- THE ROK STATEMENT WOULD SET OUT THE FACTS, WHICH ARE DAMNING, BUT WOULD ALSO SAY IT WAS KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN FOR NORTH KOREAN PARTICIPATION IN THE OLYMPICS UNDER THE IOC COMPROMISE;

-- THE ROK'S PRIMARY GOAL WAS TO START A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE NORTH, BUT THIS HAD TO BEGIN WITH A FOUNDATION OF TRUTH AND FREE FROM FEAR OF TERRORISM.

-- FYI ONLY. CHOI ALSO MUSED THAT HE MIGHT OFFER ANY MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL TO CONDUCT ITS OWN INTERVIEW OF KIM HYUN HEE, THE CONFESSED TERRORIST, IN SEOUL. END FYI

5. COMMENT. CHOI'S DILEMMA IS QUITE APPARENT. HE CAN NEITHER BE SEEN TO BE DOING NOTHING WITH THIS ISSUE NOR CAN HE APPROVE A U.N. STRATEGY THAT CARRIES A RISK OF FAILURE. HIS DECISION TO GIVE LOBBYING EFFORTS A FEW MORE DAYS CARRIES NO REAL COST, AND THE POSITIVE TONE OF THE MESSAGE HE HAS ASKED US TO CARRY SHOULD HELP. A PRESENTATION THAT EMPHASIZES THE ROLE THE COUNCIL MIGHT PLAY IN BRINGING THE KOREAS TOGETHER, IF ONLY IN DEBATE, MIGHT STRIKE A RESPONSIVE CHORD IN SOME CAPITALS. CHOI IS CONSIDERING THE MERITS OF ANOTHER DOCUMENT FOR DISTRIBUTION IN NEW YORK, AND IS ALSO FOLLOWING THROUGH

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WITH SPECIFIC REBUTTALS TO QUESTIONS PLANTED BY THE NORTH. HE IS DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF THE UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT WE HAVE GIVEN HIM THUS FAR, AND WILL CONTINUE TO VALUE OUR COUNSEL. END COMMENT.

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6. REQUEST DEPARTMENT RETRANSMIT TO SECURITY COUNCIL
COLLECTIVE. LILLEY##

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